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Tetuwán Oyate

MEMBER RESERVATIONS

- Pine Ridge
- Lower Brule
- Cheyenne River
- Standing Rock
- Rosebud
- Fort Peck
- Crow Creek
- Santee
- Canadian Sioux

Economic and Social Council
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
 Third Session
 New York, May 10-21, 2004
The United Nations

Intervention by Charmaine White Face on behalf of the Teton Sioux Nation Treaty Council

My name is Zumila Wobaga, which means, A Little Wise One Who Makes a Mark. My American name is Charmaine White Face. I am a member of the Oglala band of the Lakota, or Teton, of the Seven Council Fires of the Great Sioux Nation. I am here on behalf of the Teton Sioux Nation Treaty Council.

The old prophecies say that a time will come when the women will have to take the lead. That will be a time when survival is at hand. That time is now, and refers to the survival of, not just Indigenous peoples, but the survival of the whole world. You see here many Indigenous women who have left their families and the safety of their communities to bring messages on many different issues upon which they have concerns. My message happens to be about treaties, international agreements, and governance.

The Permanent Forum has been mandated to bring forth issues that affect Indigenous peoples in the areas of health, education, culture, human rights, the environment and economic and social development. Yet, these areas are under the control of the nation states, and are primarily considered from the perspective of non-Indigenous values and thinking. The values are based on religious and spiritual beliefs much younger than the values and spiritual beliefs of Indigenous peoples, and do not take into consideration the female perspective. Furthermore, the materialistic and linear thinking of nation states is leading to the demise of the whole world.

Some of the nation states made treaties and agreements with the sovereign nations of Indigenous peoples. In the case of my people, the United States pressed for a peace treaty in 1851 and again in 1868. Within the articles of this final treaty, the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, are all of the areas mentioned in the mandate of the Permanent Forum. If the Treaty had been honored, I probably would not have to be here today.

Since the Treaty was not honored, the following are a few of the abuses the women, children and men face today in our treaty territory which covers all of western South Dakota, and parts of Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota. This large land area is located in the central part of the United States. This area is often called the 'bread basket of the world.' Since the Treaty was not honored, besides the myriad social problems cause by forced assimilation and poverty, we also face the following:

- 27 open pit uranium mines from the 1940s and 1950s which have never been cleaned up, located in a sacred place where our people pray, and whose contamination is traveling through the air and water to the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Indian Reservations, the Missouri River and points east;
- plans for the destruction of 1,500 sacred places and burial sites for the building of new coal strip mines which will lead to further global warming;
- the building of up to 60,000 coal bed methane wells whose runoff is currently and will continue to pollute the major rivers surrounding the sacred Black Hills and eventually emptying into the Missouri River, and also increasing air pollution and global warming;

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- increasing coal strip mining in the Powder River Basin with increasing air pollution and acid rain falling on the sacred Black Hills and the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian Reservations; and
- increasing health problems caused by heavy metals leaching into the ground water from bombs and their fragments from the 1940s and 1950s bombing practice in the northern quarter of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. These are only a few of the situations we face.

Because we live in *the* middle of the richest nation state in the world, it is assumed we do not have problems and are often denied access to UN programs and agencies. As you can see, these situations could easily be considered genocidal practices as the health of the people on the reservations (more than 50,000 people) are at stake. However, pollution does not stop at skin color, and the 'bread basket of the world', which provides food for millions throughout the world, is being affected.

Therefore, the following recommendations are respectfully submitted:

1. That the Study on Treaties Agreements and Other Constructive Arrangements between States and Indigenous Peoples by Professor Miguel Alfonso Martinez (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/20, 22 June 1999) that was mandated by the UN Human Rights Commission, and the Report on the UN Expert Seminar on Treaties, Agreements, and Other Constructive Arrangements between States and Indigenous Peoples meeting in Geneva, December 15 – 17, 2003, be made part of the orientation and required reading of all members of the United Nations to educate members and staff to the history and responsibilities of the governments of the nation states and their relations with Indigenous peoples.
2. That the recommendations given in the *forementioned* Treaty Study and the Report of the Expert Seminar be implemented in a manner consistent with the Preamble to the *Charter* of the United Nations which states, “. . . to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples” as the treaties and agreements made with Indigenous peoples are an integral part of the international machinery and failure to do so begins the erosion of the basic foundation of international relations and leads to distrust by other observing nations as well.
3. That the mandate of the *Permanent* Forum on Indigenous Issues be expanded to include a new area called Governance, Treaties and International Agreements as an integral part of the mandate of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. This recommendation compliments the *existing* mandate which states that the Permanent Forum is to “raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities relating to Indigenous issues within the United Nations system.”

We sincerely hope our recommendations will be taken into consideration as they address issues that affect the entire world. Thank you. Pila maya.